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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 BEIRUT 000107

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MARCHESE/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/19/2017

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [LE](#) [GM](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: GERMAN ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LEBANESE
BORDER CONTROLS

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman. Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) a
nd (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The German Embassy DCM has provided us with an overview of German support for enhancing Lebanese government control over points of entry by air, sea, and land. She described activities launched after the adoption of UNSCR 1701 in August 2006, and which include customs assistance at Beirut international airport, coastal patrol programs, and a pilot land border project in north Lebanon. Beirut's international airport, she said, now meets international standards. The Lebanese Navy is capable and well-trained but drastically lacking in equipment; the Germans will be providing two high-speed coastal patrol ships. The Syria-Lebanon land border, however, remains largely out of control, with easy access for smugglers of all items ranging from consumer goods to weapons for Hizballah. The Germans are leading a low profile but substantial pilot project in the north and seek cooperation from other western donors. Embassy ODC Chief met with the head of the German team that is promoting border control assistance in the north. German plans for the north are reported in detail in paras 10-13 below. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On January 19 DCM called on German Embassy DCM Irene Plank to review German activities and perspectives on Lebanon's ability to control its borders. Plank has been deeply involved in German projects that were initiated after the adoption of UNSCR 1701 on August 11, 2006, which calls upon the Government of Lebanon to secure its borders to prevent the entry of unauthorized arms. She summarized that Lebanese border control is plagued by a lack of coordination among the four agencies whose responsibilities bear on border security: Customs, the Surete Generale, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), and the Internal Security Forces (ISF).

¶3. (C) When German Foreign Minister Steinmeier visited Beirut on September 7, he brought with him a team of five border police experts and five customs experts. She described them as an "A team" of German border experts, who stayed in Lebanon until December 10. A follow-on team of lesser renown, led by a member of the original team, is now in Lebanon for the indefinite future. The ten experts who came down with FM Steinmeier completed an initial study in October. DCM Plank has provided us with the text of this 64-page document. In her words, the situation they encountered was a disaster. The team found no institutional

cooperation among the four border security agencies. Customs, they commended, was the least fragmented along sectarian lines of all the services. The ISF and the Surete Generale did not communicate with each other at all. Equipment shortages were severe. The German experts found that the LAF, in its land border duties, had only eight helicopters available for patrol, and of these, only five were operational. The LAF had no effective communications between its surveillance helicopters and border posts. As a result, the helicopters had to land at nearby bases, and convey by bicycle messenger to other posts any information that they detected on border violations.

BEIRUT AIRPORT

¶4. (C) The German team of experts focused first on Beirut (Rafiq Hariri) International Airport. In addition to various training, the Germans are now providing document scanners which will give the Lebanese the highest ratio in the world of scanners to passenger traffic. The scanners will be able to detect whether documents are valid or false, and it will be connected to a data base that can verify information on a given person. A German specialist will arrive next week to do training on the scanners, and some Lebanese officials have already been trained in Germany. On the basis of a German recommendation, there is now a security operations room at the airport under the command of a General Shoukri. Plank described the airport as now meeting international standards, and she doubted that any serious smuggling of weapons was being carried out through the airport.

NAVY AND COASTAL PATROL

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¶5. (C) Plank described the Lebanese Navy as well trained, well organized, but a disaster on equipment. Lebanese coastal patrol boats, she said, cannot even leave their ports during the winter because the Mediterranean swells would swamp these short-length vessels. In response, the Germans will be sending two 35-meter used coastal boats, the Bremen II and the Bremen IX. They will have a top speed, she thought, of about 27 knots. The Lebanese crews for these boats will be trained in Germany, with the boats operational in May. She said that the United Arab Emirates have given the Lebanese ten small fast boats for coastal patrol.

¶6. (S) Plank noted that during the summer 2006 war, Israeli attacks had destroyed Lebanon's coastal radar system. Germany is taking on reconstruction of this network, furnishing equipment of U.S. technology with Siemens software. She said the radar system will meet international standards, and be able to communicate information to a central operations room. The new radar system should be up and running by late June. Plank commented that Lebanon's mountainous terrain presents special challenges for coastal radar.

¶7. (C) Plank believed that Lebanon's coast is not under effective border control, and that lots of smuggling could be going on. But she also thought that the volume of smuggling may have decreased markedly because of the psychological deterrent of large German naval ships that are part of the UNIFIL presence.

SYRIA-LEBANON LAND BORDER

¶8. (C) Here, Plank said, are the biggest problems. Lebanese customs did not even have the necessary cars, nor an efficient communications network. Germany, she said, is providing Customs with 40 cars, scanners, and communications equipment.

¶9. (S) More specifically, the Germans are setting up a pilot border control project at the north Lebanon crossing points of El Arida and El Aboudiye, though full funding may be uncertain now (see below). Prime Minister Siniora had given the Germans a green light in November 2006 to proceed with this project, which will include an operations room. Subsequently, Druse leader Walid Jumblatt asked the Germans to do a similar project in his Chouf region, commenting that he would provide security for the Germans as they set up the project. The Germans demurred for the time being. Plank noted that the Danes and Canadians are cooperating with them in support for enhanced border security in the north.

¶10. (C) Also on January 19, Embassy Poloff and Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) Chief met separately with the head of the German team providing border assistance, Colonel Detlev Karioth. Koriath reported that he had met with and briefed PM Siniora last week on the pilot project in the north. Koriath said the PM gave his verbal approval and promised the Germans a written approval sometime next week. However, Karioth said, he has not yet discussed this project with the Ministry of Defense or the LAF.

¶11. (C) Koriath estimated that the project will take 90 days to complete and cost around USD 5 million. He had briefed the concept in late October 2006 to the international donors, security coordination group which meets regularly in Beirut. Since then, the Danes have offered one million euros toward the project for capacity building and training. Koriath asked if the United States would consider supporting the project. He suggested that assistance would not have to be directed at the pilot program specifically but rather could be in the form of diversions, at the request of the U.S., from equipment packages already going to the LAF. He stated rather frankly that, in fact, it was probably best that U.S. financial support be as subtle as possible, given the nature of the project objectives and regional sentiments. We were noncommittal on whether U.S. funding is possible, but expressed our support and enthusiasm for the concept.

¶12. (C) In spite of Koriath's assertion that the project could begin within 60 days if given GOL approval and the

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necessary financial commitments are in place, some of his comments suggest that this timeline is optimistic. Koriath did not yet have lists of needed equipment or expected cross-agency coordination issues. He spoke of the need for vehicles and communication equipment, but he had not yet begun discussions with the Ministry of Defense or the LAF, and thus had no input from the Lebanese military. He asked that we provide him copies of our assessments to assist in his planning process.

¶13. COMMENT: Our assessment is that the Germans have an excellent concept, that if planned and resourced well, could provide a great opportunity to learn lessons on procedures, equipment, and agency coordination that would be of great benefit to the larger border control effort. We could assist considerably by providing funding and access to our assessments. However, the security assistance system does not always work quickly. Even assuming that the necessary funding, planning and identification of needs could occur soon, the timeline for bringing the right equipment together, particularly technical equipment, could slow this down considerably. It is still, however, a worthwhile effort.
END COMMENT.

¶14. (C) German Embassy DCM Plank described to DCM her thoughts on economic aspects of border security between Lebanon and Syria. She noted how border area residents on both sides cross the border frequently for reasons that span family visits to school enrollment to shopping and trade. Given the economic basis for border movement that is to some degree uncontrollable, more should be done in the realm of economic development for the border regions, many of which

are quite poor.

¶15. (S) Plank considered the border control challenge as a two-sided issue, in which the Syrians must be enlisted to cooperate. There had previously been a Syrian-Lebanese border commission, which might be worth resurrecting. The Germans had raised this with Prime Minister Siniora, who understood well the nature of the issues. PM Siniora, Plank said, then asked the Germans to approach the Syrians on his behalf. The Germans, she said, do not yet have a political green light to have their Embassy in Damascus approach the Syrians, but Berlin is aware of the proposal. She thought that this issue might arise in the Quartet. She summarized that with the airport under control and the coast well on its way to coming under control, the Syria-Lebanon land border remains the outstanding -- and daunting -- challenge.

¶16. (C) DCM asked Plank whether the Germans considered providing sensors and high powered cameras to ensure constant surveillance of the Syria-Lebanon land border. She admitted that this technology could be a good idea, but for now, lack of infrastructure and training on the part of the Lebanese precludes this option. The LAF would need extensive training in use and maintenance. Without this training, the sensors and camera network would be "a ruin within three months."

¶17. (S) DCM also asked Plank if the Germans had received information from Israel about renewed smuggling of weapons to Hizballah over the land border from Syria. She said that the Israelis have conveyed this concern, but have not provided the kind of details that the Germans say they need if the assertions are to be credible. She also recounted a conversation she had the previous evening with a prominent "third way" Shia. He reported that Hizballah officials are exaggerating the amount of weaponry that Hizballah is now receiving, and they in fact would like far more than what they are getting.

CONCLUSION

¶18. (C) Plank invited help from other countries, including continued consultations through the western embassies' informal security coordination mechanism in Beirut.

She said that Germany is providing assistance that they think the Lebanese can absorb, which means mostly training, at least for now. Her figure for total equipment assistance to Lebanese Customs to date was euros 5.3 million, plus the 40 cars and the coastal radar that will cost about USD 1.5 million. Plank said the Germans are deliberately maintaining a low public profile in their programs, in order to avoid

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Lebanese internal political controversy.

FELTMAN